

AMENDMENTS TO CLAIMS

1. (Previously Presented) A method for ensuring that a user acknowledges an advertisement in exchange for access, via a computer network, to a website that has been requested by the user, comprising the steps of:

after said user requests access to said website via the computer network, causing an advertising server to present an interactive banner advertisement to the user, said interactive banner advertisement providing information promoting a product or service,

upon presentation of said banner advertisement, preventing access to said website that was requested by the user before the user requested access to said website, unless an appropriate reply to said banner advertisement is submitted by the user, and

permitting access to the website only if the user submits, via the computer network, an appropriate reply to the interactive banner advertisement, and continuing to prevent said access to said website so long as the user fails to submit the appropriate reply.

2. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said website is requested by inputting an Internet uniform resource locator.

3. (Canceled)

4. (Canceled)

5. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said website is provided over a wireless network.

6. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 5, wherein said wireless network is a cellular network.

7. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein client software connects said user's computing device to a proxy server, and wherein said proxy server carries out said steps of presenting said interactive banner advertisement and permitting access to said service only if the user submits an appropriate reply to the banner advertisement.

8. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 7, wherein a provider of the website downloads said client software to the user's computing device when said user requests access to said website.

9. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 8, wherein said client software is resident on said user's computing device before said user requests access to said website.

10. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 8, wherein said client software is resident on a server located at or that provides the website.

11. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 8, wherein client software connects said user's computing device to a server located at or that provides said website, and wherein said server carries out said steps of presenting said interactive banner advertisement and permitting access to said website.

12. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 11, wherein said client software is a plug-in to an Internet browser installed on said user's computing device.

13. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 12, wherein said plug-in is downloaded to the user's computing device when said user requests access to said website as a pre-requisite to gaining access to said website.

14. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 11, wherein said website is a subscription-based service.

Serial Number 09/742,438

15. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 14, further comprising the steps of identifying said user and determining whether said user has a subscription to said service, and wherein said step of presenting said interactive banner advertisement is carried out if said user does not have a subscription to said service.

16. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 15, further comprising the steps of tallying credits each time the user responds correctly to an interactive banner advertisement, and of carrying out said step of presenting said interactive banner advertisement only if said user does not have a subscription to said service and said user further does not have a predetermined number of said credits.

17. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 1, further comprising the step of tallying credits each time the user responds correctly to an interactive banner advertisement.

18. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 17, further comprising the step of applying said credits against a subscription to said website.

19. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said interactive banner advertisements are selected based on information stored on said user's computing device and information provided by said user.

20. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 19, wherein said information stored on said user's computing device is in the form of cookies.

21. (Previously Presented) A system for ensuring that a user acknowledges an advertisement in exchange for access to a website, comprising:

a computing or communications device of said user, said computing or communications device being connected to a provider of said website, over a data communications network;

Serial Number 09/742,438

software arranged to be loaded onto said computing or communications device and arranged to participate in presentation of an interactive banner advertisement to the user after said user requests access to said website, said interactive banner advertisement providing information promoting a product or service,

wherein, upon presentation of the interactive banner advertisement, said user is prevented from accessing said website that was requested by the user before presentation of said banner advertisement, and permitted to access to the website only if the user submits an appropriate reply to the interactive banner advertisement, and wherein said user continues to be prevented from accessing the website so long as the user fails to submit the appropriate reply.

22. (Original) A system as claimed in claim 21, wherein said network is the Internet.

23. (Original) A system as claimed in claim 21, wherein said network is a wireless network;

24. (Original) A system as claimed in claim 21, wherein said network is an interactive digital television network.

25. (Original) A system as claimed in claim 21, wherein said software connects said user's computing device to a proxy server, and wherein said proxy server carries out said steps of presenting said interactive banner advertisement and permitting access to said service only if the user submits an appropriate reply to the banner advertisement.

26. (Previously Presented) A system as claimed in claim 25, wherein a provider of the website downloads said software to the user's computing device when said user requests access to said website.

27. (Previously Presented) A system as claimed in claim 21, wherein said software is resident on said user's computing or communications device before said user requests access to said website.

28. (Previously Presented) A system as claimed in claim 21, wherein said software is resident on a server located at or that provides the website.

29. (Previously Presented) A system as claimed in claim 21, wherein said software connects said user's computing or communications device to a server located at or that provides said website, and wherein said server is arranged to present said interactive banner advertisement and permit access to said website.

30. (Original) A system as claimed in claim 29, wherein said software is a plug-in to an Internet browser installed on said user's computing device.

31. (Previously Presented) A system as claimed in claim 30, wherein said plug-in is downloaded to the user's computing device when said user requests access to said website as a pre-requisite to gaining access to said website.

32. (Previously Presented) A system as claimed in claim 21, wherein said website is a subscription-based service.

33. (Original) A system as claimed in claim 21, further including means for tallying credits each time the user responds correctly to an interactive banner advertisement.

34. (Previously Presented) A system as claimed in claim 33, further comprising means for applying said credits against a subscription to said website.

35. (Previously Presented) A system for ensuring that a user acknowledges an advertisement in exchange for access to a website, comprising:

a computing device arranged to be connected to a computing or communications device of said user over a data communications network, said computing device being arranged to present an interactive banner advertisement to the user after said user requests access to said

website, said interactive banner advertisement providing information promoting a product or service,

said computing device further being arranged to prevent access to said website that was requested by the user before presentation of said banner advertisement, to permit access to the website only if the user submits an appropriate reply to the interactive banner advertisement, and to continue to block access to the website so long as the user fails to submit the appropriate reply.

36. (Original) A system as claimed in claim 35, wherein said network is the Internet.

37. (Original) A system as claimed in claim 35, wherein said network is a wireless network;

38. (Original) A system as claimed in claim 35, wherein said network is an interactive digital television network.

39. (Currently Amended) A system as claimed in claim 35, wherein said ~~electronic address, service, or content website~~ is a subscription-based service.

40. (Original) A system as claimed in claim 35, further including means for tallying credits each time the user responds correctly to an interactive banner advertisement.

41. (Previously Presented) A system as claimed in claim 40, further comprising means for applying said credits against a subscription to said website.

42. (Previously Presented) A banner advertisement for providing information promoting a product or service, comprising:

promotional text arranged in a box on a display screen of a computing or communications device and presented after a user of the computing or communications device requests access to website over a network; and

an area associated with said box for permitting entry of a response to said text,

Serial Number 09/742,438

wherein said banner advertisement prevents access to said that was requested by the user before presentation of said banner advertisement unless said response to said text is entered by the user advertisement, and wherein said banner advertisement blocks access to the website so long as the user fails to submit the appropriate reply.

43. (Original) An advertisement as claimed in claim 42, wherein said network is the Internet.

44. (Original) An advertisement as claimed in claim 43, wherein said area includes a pop-up menu.

45. (Original) An advertisement as claimed in claim 43, further comprising a hyperlink to a website of said advertiser.

46. (Original) An advertisement as claimed in claim 43, wherein said banner advertisement is in a multimedia format.

47. (Original) An advertisement as claimed in claim 46, wherein said banner advertisement further includes sounds.

48. (Original) An advertisement as claimed in claim 43, wherein said network is a wireless network.

49. (Original) An advertisement as claimed in claim 43, wherein said network is an interactive digital television network.